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CREATIVE READING.

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CREATIVE READING IS DEFINED AS READING FOR IMPLIED AND INFERRED MEANINGS, APPRECIATIVE REACTIONS, AND CRITICAL EVALUATION. THE ACT OF CRITICAL READING GOES BEYOND LITERAL COMPREHENSION TO DEMAND THAT THE READER PRODUCE FRESH, ORIGINAL IDEAS NOT EXPLICITLY STATED IN THE READING MATERIAL. THE READER BECOMES AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT AND ADDS TO WHAT THE AUTHOR HAS WRITTEN. OPPORTUNITIES FOR CREATIVE READING SKILL DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN THE READING PROGRAM FOR EVERY CHILD AT EVERY LEVEL. SEVERAL SITUATIONS AT VARIOUS PRIMARY GRADE LEVELS DEMONSTRATE CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES PROMOTING CREATIVE READING ARE PRESENTED. ELEVEN SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING CREATIVE READING ARE LISTED. GUIDELINES FOR TEACHERS TO USE IN DEVELOPING A PROGRAM OF CREATIVE READING INSTRUCTION ARE PRESENTED. SIX REFERENCES ARE MADE TO CHILDREN'S LITERATURE. THIS PAPER WAS PRESENTED AT THE INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE (BOSTON, APRIL 24-27, 1968). (KJ)

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COMPREHENSION AND STUDY SKILLS
SESSION 17A:
PRIMARY -
CREATIVE READING

RE 001 248

A brief survey of the literature reveals that the concept of creative reading has not been sharply defined. Creative reading and critical reading are frequently described in similar terms and with closely related examples of behavior cited. Let us first then attempt to answer these questions: What is creative reading? What is the relationship between critical and creative reading?

Creative and Critical Reading

Russell (5) in Children Learn to Read, suggests that individuals

read at four overlapping levels. These levels are: (1) word identification, (2) casual skimming, (3) reading for exact, literal meanings, and (4) creative reading.

What is involved in each of these levels? Word identification refers to pronouncing or calling the words. Little attention may be given by the reader to meaning of the words or recall of ideas. In casual skimming, the reader rapidly gains an overview of the total selection, perhaps in an attempt to determine whether or not detailed reading is required. Literal comprehension -- reading for exact meaning -- requires careful reading. The reader typically responds by recalling the ideas as stated by the author. When questions such as "Where did Jimmy go?", "What did he buy?", "Who did he see on his way home?" are posed, practice is being given in developing skill in exact literal comprehension.

What happens in creative reading? Creative reading, according to Russell (5) includes reading for implied and inferred meanings, appreciative reactions, and critical evaluations. Discussion of questions such as "What do you think will happen now?" "Why?" "How do you think the story character felt?", "Have you ever felt like that?", requires reading for implied and inferred meanings. Literal comprehension of the facts is, of course, basic to this type of reading. But the reader is required to go beyond, to read between the lines and perhaps to derive original meanings and ideas in relationship to his own experience.

Literal understanding and going beyond the words of the author are also required in reading for appreciative reactions. Reading for appreciative reactions draws heavily upon ability to employ imagery, identify with the story characters, and relate emotionally. For example, the child who can picture vividly in his mind the one "scraggly cat" in Millions of Cats" (2) is utilizing imagery. He is identifying strongly with the story when he indicates, "I would love that cat. I wish he were mine."

In the third type of creative reading, critical evaluations are required. The child who is able to distinguish between real and fanciful tales is making a start on evaluating reading material critically. He compares his past experiences with the story facts and concludes that "this story really couldn't happen because ...." In critical reading, material is evaluated by comparison with known norms or standards, and a judgment is made.

We might then conclude that critical reading is an aspect of creative reading. The total act of creative reading demands that the reader produce fresh, original ideas not explicitly stated in the reading material. The reader becomes an active participant -- really a co=author -- and he adds to what the author has written. Creative reading requires thinking, imagination, and emergence of ideas which are products of the reader's thoughts. The reader gives something of himself.

Who Can Read Creatively?

One of the major misconceptions is that creative reading should be

delayed until later grades. Every child at every level can engage in creative reading. This is not to say that all children can think on the same level. Of course, individual differences exist. But, opportunities for the development of creative reading abilities must be included in the reading program at all levels. Creative reading is a complex skill which cannot be perfected in any one grade once and for all.

Developing Creative Reading Abilities

Let us look at several situations at various primary levels and note some activities in which creative reading abilities were being developed.

On the prereading level, the teacher had read aloud the story Ask Mr. Bear. (1) As you recall, Danny, the little boy, wanted to give his mother a birthday present. He asked several animals -- a hen, goose, goat, sheep and cow -- to give him something, but he rejects each offer. Finally, he accepts the suggestion of Mr. Bear and gives his mother a big "bear hug". After the teacher had read the story, the class decided to act out the story. Along with the usual preparation, there was considerable discussion of how Danny felt at the beginning of the story. The teacher posed such questions as "How do you think Danny felt when he had talked to the first two animals?", "Do you suppose he was becoming discouraged?", "How would you have felt?", "Can we show our feelings as we act out the story?". This line of questioning was continued. The youngsters were inferring

emotional reactions and then living the part.

The next sequence took place on the following day. After recalling the story, with teacher guidance the group planned a new version of the story by creating new characters that Danny might have asked. The result was that the story was changed to a modern city setting. Danny asked his friend next door, a neighbor, the postman, and finally the teacher -- who suggested he make a birthday card at school! This teaching situation represented going beyond what was read and called into action imagination, fresh ideas, and original constructs of the students.

In another primary classroom, The Snowy Day (4) was being read aloud by the teacher. At intervals in the story, the teacher stopped to ask these questions: "Do you think Peter had seen snow before?" "Why or why not?", "Can you think of any ways that Peter might have been able to keep his snowball from melting?" After the story the teacher stated: "Let's pretend that you are Peter. You are going to tell your friend what happened to the snowball. What would you say? What would Peter's friend say?" Several opportunities were given for different students to take the role of Peter and his friend. The ensuing conversations provided pupils an opportunity to engage in a meaningful creative reading activity based upon reading.

The carrying out of creative reading activities at the primary level is not limited to those situations in which the teacher reads aloud. Similar possibilities for furthering creative reading abilities are inherent in basal and supplementary reading materials.

An example of such occurred in a lesson observed in a second grade classroom. The teacher was preparing the reading group for the story "Jeff and the Fourteen Eyes" in the book Star Bright. (6) Initially this question was posed: "From the title, can you imagine what the story might be about?" A lively discussion followed, with numerous ideas expressed. After the reading of the story, pupils compared what the author included in the story with their initial guesses. Later discussion led to each pupil writing another episode to the story.

Perhaps these second-hand visits to real classrooms sufficiently sparked your thinking about ways in which skills of creative reading can be encouraged and practiced. Each teacher must select and create activities suitable to the abilities of the children within her class. The following activities, some which were evident in the preceding descriptions, seem especially appropriate to primary grades:

1. Speculate what the story is about from the story title. After reading the story, compare points of likenesses and differences.
2. Respond to questions posed by the teacher during guided reading: "What will happen next? Why do you think so?"
3. Discuss the accuracy of illustrations; compare to size, color, and characteristics of objects in real life.
4. Evaluate the story characters. Decide whether or not you would like to have them for friends.
5. Tell (or write) the story from the point of view of different story characters.

6. Discuss moral issues in story, i.e., was Little Red Riding Hood a bad girl for stopping to pick flowers and not going directly to her grandmother's house? Put yourself in her place. React as you would.
7. Create new story endings, either orally, pictorally, or in written form.
8. Discuss whether or not story events could happen today. Why or why not?
9. Discuss what might have happened before the story opened, and what might have happened after the close.
10. Answer questions which involve sensing relationships, i.e., "Why did _____ say .....?", "What would you have said if you were in the same situation?", "Has anything like this ever happened to you?"
11. Act out the story as it was written by the author. Add different events and sequences and/or new endings.

Guidelines for Teachers

The teacher plays the key role in structuring the instructional program in such a way that creative reading abilities are developed. What guidelines then, can be used by teachers desiring to further this higher level of reading?

First of all, teachers must examine their definitions of reading. "Parroting back" the words of the author is the goal of too many

teachers. Although recall of the author's ideas is one phase of the total instructional program, a broader definition is needed. As Gray (3) stated, reading has the four dimensions of perception, understanding, reaction, and integration. Reaction and integration represents the area of creative reading.

Second, teachers must provide instructional time for creative reading activities. And it does take time! If there is to be thinking and reaction to the content of reading material, the idea of "completing so many pages" in a day or "so many books" in a year must be abandoned. Pupils must be given time to react thoughtfully and to be creative.

Third, teachers must not limit the opportunities for engaging in creative reading activities to only the most talented readers. Every pupil has some creativity within him.

Fourth, teachers must establish a classroom atmosphere and environment conducive to creative thinking. Certain physical, psychological, social and emotional conditions must be present. A comfortable room arrangement, one which is intellectually challenging, should be provided. Also required is good rapport with the students and acceptance and respect for each student and his ideas.

Fifth, teachers must be aware of possibilities in which the total curriculum can be used to further creative reading abilities. Although only phases of the reading program have been used to illustrate creative reading situations, the total school day abounds in situations from which creative reading activities emanate.

Sixth, teachers must realize that posing provocative questions about the reading material -- both before, during, and after -- is one of the most effective ways to stimulate children to think as they read and to think creatively about what they have read. It is in the way that the teacher motivates and questions about reading that creative abilities are developed. Questions involving varied responses should not be shunned; they should be included in each lesson.

Lastly, teachers must recognize that young readers acquire creative reading abilities only after many opportunities for practice. If early results seem unsuccessful, do not become discouraged and give up.

Conclusion

Primary teachers should be greatly concerned about developing creative readers. Creative reading requires the reader to produce fresh original ideas, develop new insights, and respond imaginatively. If students are to grow in their abilities to read creatively, numerous opportunities must be provided in the school program. Teachers can create opportunities to further creative reading abilities.

I hope that you will be challenged to develop ways of including creative reading in your daily teaching. If you become proficient in developing this higher level of reading, your pupils will become more excited and more enthusiastic about reading. And, you too will gain increased satisfaction and rewards!

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